

Ball Building
Lawyers' Row Block
1437 N. Court House Road
Arlington
Arlington County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1272

HABS
VA,
FARL,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS AND
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BALL BUILDING

HABS No. VA-1272

HABS
VA,
7-ARL,
2-

Location: 1437 N. Court House Road, Arlington, Virginia

Present Owner: Arlington County, Virginia

Present Use: Demolished in May 1990

Significance: The Ball Building was part of the Lawyers' Row complex located on the east side of N. Court House Road opposite the 1960 Arlington County Court House. The lawyers' (or courthouse) row represents a cultural and architectural heritage that is unique to Virginia. Beginning in the eighteenth century, small service buildings such as these, subservient to the larger courthouse, were erected to accommodate lawyers and clerks. The Ball Building was listed on the county's Inventory of Historic Resources. (See Lawyers' Row Block, HABS No. VA-1277)

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1935-41. Real estate assessment records date the structure to 1941., but a building permit was issued to Frank L. Ball on 3 July 1935.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Ball Building occupied part of lot 10, block 9, Fort Myer Heights as platted in Deed Book N4, page 50. Records are located in the Virginia Land Records office. The following is an incomplete chain of title:

Will Book 56, page 75: Will of Frank L. Ball. [Due to a fire in the Clerk of Court's office, Will Books were unavailable during summer 1990.]

Deed dated 16 October 1984: Frank L. Ball Jr., Marie J. Ball, Aline B. McCarthy, Walter Savage, Barbara B. Savage, Earl Wiltshire, Elizabeth B. Wiltshire, Randolph A. Graves and Virginia B. Graves to Geoffrey T. Williams, trustee. Deed Book 2156, page 586.

Deed dated 7 September 1989: Geoffrey T. Williams to County Board, Arlington County, Virginia. Deed Book 2398, page 1900.

4. Original plans and construction: None have been located.
5. Alterations and Additions: The first building permit, from 1935, was

probably for the addition rather than for construction of the original block. No alterations or additions requiring permits were made to the building, according to records, until permit No. 9001 (21 July 1968) for reroofing, and No. 10038 (29 May 1975) for replacement of an underground fuel tank, were issued.

B. Historical Context:

Frank L. Ball, Sr. (1885-1966), a native Arlingtonian, practiced law from 1916 until his death in 1966. Described as "one of the brightest and most popular of the young attorneys practicing law at the Alexandria County bar in 1915," Ball was the first president of the Arlington Bar Association, and he served as Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, and Prince William counties from 1916-24. After that, he and John C. McCarthy opened a private practice at 120 Sherman Avenue along with Lawrence Douglas. That building was one-story high, 12 feet wide, and built of tile with a frame addition on the rear. The Ball Building was built for the law firm Frank L. Ball and John C. McCarthy, formed in 1924.

From 1924-32 Ball served as a state senator; in 1927 he first proposed the incorporation of Arlington and the manager system, though it would not be legislated until three years later.¹ In the 1930s he then returned to Arlington to work and build 1437 N. Court House Road. Denman Rucker (1911-87), himself Commonwealth's Attorney in 1948-52, worked at the firm in 1937-38.²

The Ball family owned the structure until 1984 when the last tenant, attorney Geoffrey T. Williams, purchased it. In addition to his legal practice, Ball was active in many civic organizations and was a charter member of the Arlington Historical Society.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Ball Building is a two-story Colonial Revival structure with a large rear ell, arranged in a T plan. The main block is five bays wide by one unit deep; the ell, three bays wide and three units deep.
2. Condition of the fabric: Excellent, until demolished.

B. Description of Exterior:

¹ Robert Nelson Anderson, "Arlington Adopts the County Manager Form of Government," 52.

² "Frank Ball's Competency," Alexandria County Monitor (29 May 1915); Polk's, 630; "Denman Rucker" obituary, Northern Virginia Sun (5 May 1987). E. Wade Ball, his brother, was Treasurer in 1908-32, before which he was Deputy Treasurer for seven years.

1. Overall dimensions: 4,226 square feet.
2. Foundations: 12" concrete block with 12" x 24" footings.
3. Wall construction: The walls of the front block are brick laid in running bond with brick quoins at the front corners. A band of concrete runs along the west facade below first-floor windows. The rear block is also brick. There is one course of headers located five courses above grade; above the header course, the brick is laid in a running bond.
4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing brick.
5. Porches: A concrete stoop is in front of the west entry. The back door, east facade, is reached from a concrete stoop with two steps. Above the front door on the west facade is a hood with a standing-seam copper roof. This is supported by paired, curved, metal brackets that are anchored to the wall.
6. Chimneys: One metal chimney is located near the south wall at the junction of the two blocks.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are two exterior doors, both at the south end of the building; one in the west facade, the other in the east facade. The front door is missing and has been replaced by a plywood panel. The back door is a glazed panel door. The hardware is missing and has been replaced with a padlock.
 - b. Windows: All but the plate-glass picture window in the center bay of the first floor, west facade, are double six-light casements. Signage on the plate-glass window reads "Law Offices of Newlon & Williams, P.C./Geoffrey T. Williams/Walter J. Newlon Attorneys." All trim in the original block is painted off-white, in the addition it is painted black. All sills are one course of vertical brick headers. Window wells for the cellar are brick lined.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The roof of the original block is gable-end covered with asphalt shingles. The roof of the addition is flat. The tops of the gable-end walls (north and south facades) are parapetted to resemble large chimneys and feature a cast-concrete coping.
 - b. Cornice: Wood dentils on the original block, the only cornice on the addition is a plain plank.
9. A band of concrete facing spans the central three bays below the second-floor

windows. Metal letters anchored to the facing read "Ball Building." The signage is flanked by two metal medallions.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Cellar: The cellar is entered from stairs that originate in the first-floor hall. Below the first bay of the rear wing only, it contains a small hall and two rooms. The room opposite the stairs contains an oil furnace; the other room houses electrical and communications equipment.
- b. First floor: The first floor contains ten rooms, including two bathrooms, a utility room, and three halls. The front and back doors open into a small vestibule at the south end of the building. North of this is a long, narrow room occupying the central three bays of the first floor. A door in the north wall leads to a smaller room. A door in the east wall leads to two halls: one on a north-south axis contains two bathrooms and terminates at the top of the cellar stairs; the other on an east-west axis along the length of the rear wing. There are three rooms to the south of the east-west hall, two to the north of it. The hall terminates in a utility room.
- c. Second floor: The second floor contains ten offices, two bathrooms, a utility room, and two halls. The stairs from the first floor terminate at a hall running north-south the length of the original building. There are four rooms west of the hall: all but the one in the southwest corner are entered from the hall itself, the fourth room is entered via an interior door. East of the hall at the north end of the building are two bathrooms. An east-west hall occupies the length of the rear wing. There are three rooms on either side of the hall; it terminates in a utility room.

2. Stairways: There are two stairways. The cellar is accessed by a single-turn stair made of concrete with a pipe railing. A single-turn stair with a landing, originating in the entrance hall at the south end of the building, connects the first and second floors. The wood risers, 7" x 10" (deep), are carpeted. The newel post and bannister are pine, stained dark. The square wood balusters are painted gray. The newel has a ball finial stained to match the banister.
3. Flooring: First floor: linoleum tile over concrete; except for the bathrooms, this is topped with wall-to-wall carpeting. Second floor: pine planks covered with wall-to-wall carpeting.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls in the original block are plaster; above the chair rail, the walls are papered. All baseboards, chair rails, crown molding,

and window trim on the first floor is painted gray. In the entry hall and the large room on the first floor, the walls below the chair rail are plastered and painted gray. The ceilings are covered with white acoustical tile. All bathrooms have tiled lower walls; above the walls are papered. The ceilings are white painted plaster. In the addition, the walls are plasterboard over wood frame.

5. Doorways and doors: Typical openings are 3' x 7' 10-1/2". Most have panel doors. Those in office areas are entirely wood, those opening on to halls have glazing over one wood panel. Each door opening into a hall is topped by a hopper window. At the end of the central hall on both floors of the rear wing, a set of wood louvered doors open into utility areas. On the second floor, a wood louvered folding door is located near the end of the central hall.
6. Decorative features: Baseboard, chair rail, and crown molding are used throughout. On the second floor of the addition, all windows have wood cornices. Rooms on the second floor have built-in book cases. One room (first bay, south of hall) has synthetic wood panelling. Moldings used on the second floor are identical to those on the first floor. Above the door to the utility room on the second floor is a wood grill.
7. Lighting fixtures: All rooms and halls on the first and second floors are equipped with fluorescent lights. The bathrooms and cellar have incandescent light fixtures. The cellar features bare incandescent bulbs in enamelled fixtures.
8. Heating: One of the cellar rooms houses an oil furnace. Free-standing iron radiators are located in the entry hall and the large room on the first floor. Rooms on the second floor have heating vents in the floors.

D. Site:

1. General Setting: The Ball Building is located on the east side of N. Court House Road opposite the former Arlington County Court House. It is situated between a public parking lot (north) and the Charles T. Jesse Building (south, HABS No. VA-1273). To the rear/east of the building is a parking lot. Another structure was attached to the north wall of the Ball Building, but it was removed previously.
2. Landscaping, enclosures: A foundation planting of shrubs ran across the west facade below the first-floor windows. A small lawn existed between the structure and the N. Court House Road sidewalk.

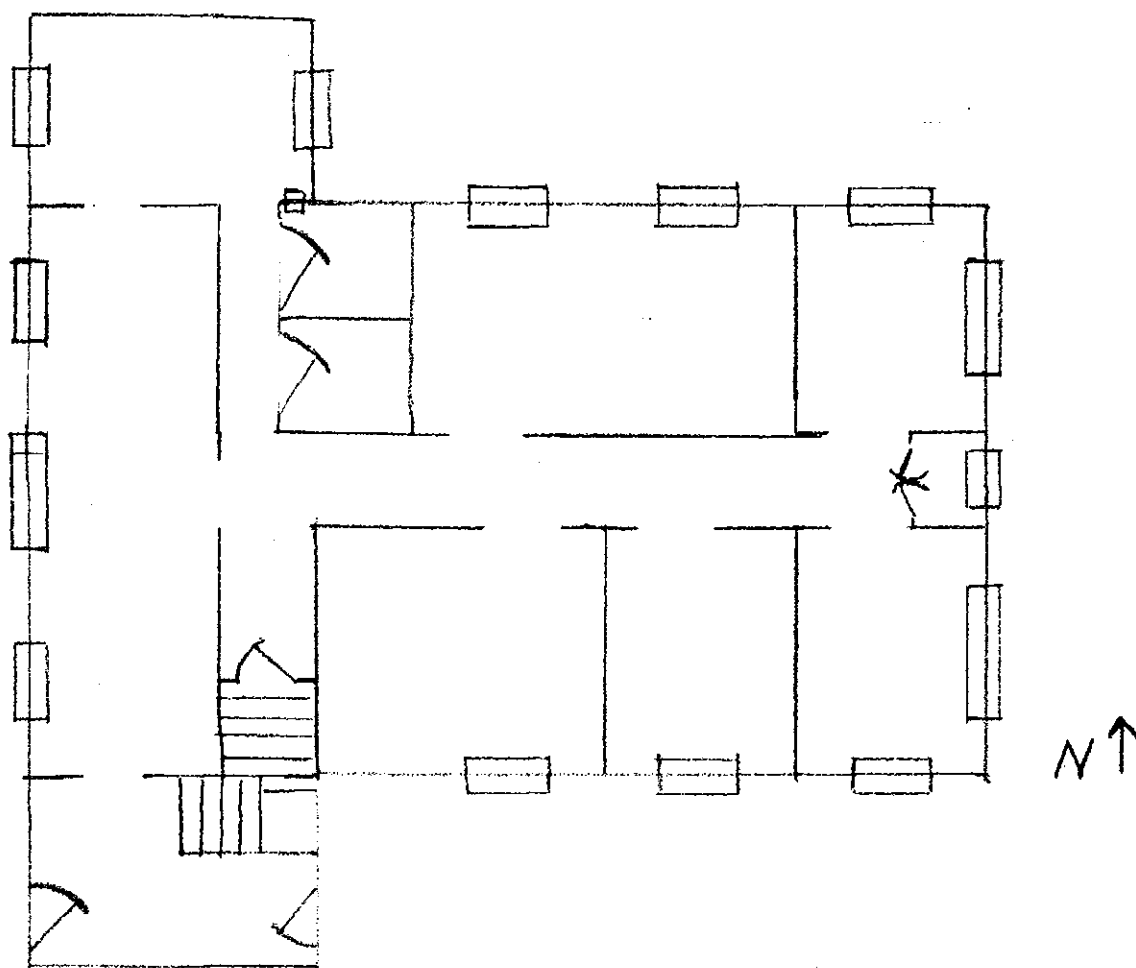
PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Primary and unpublished sources: For a complete bibliography, see this section of Lawyers' Row Block, HABS No. VA-1277.
- B. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: The photographic archives of the Arlington Historical Society.

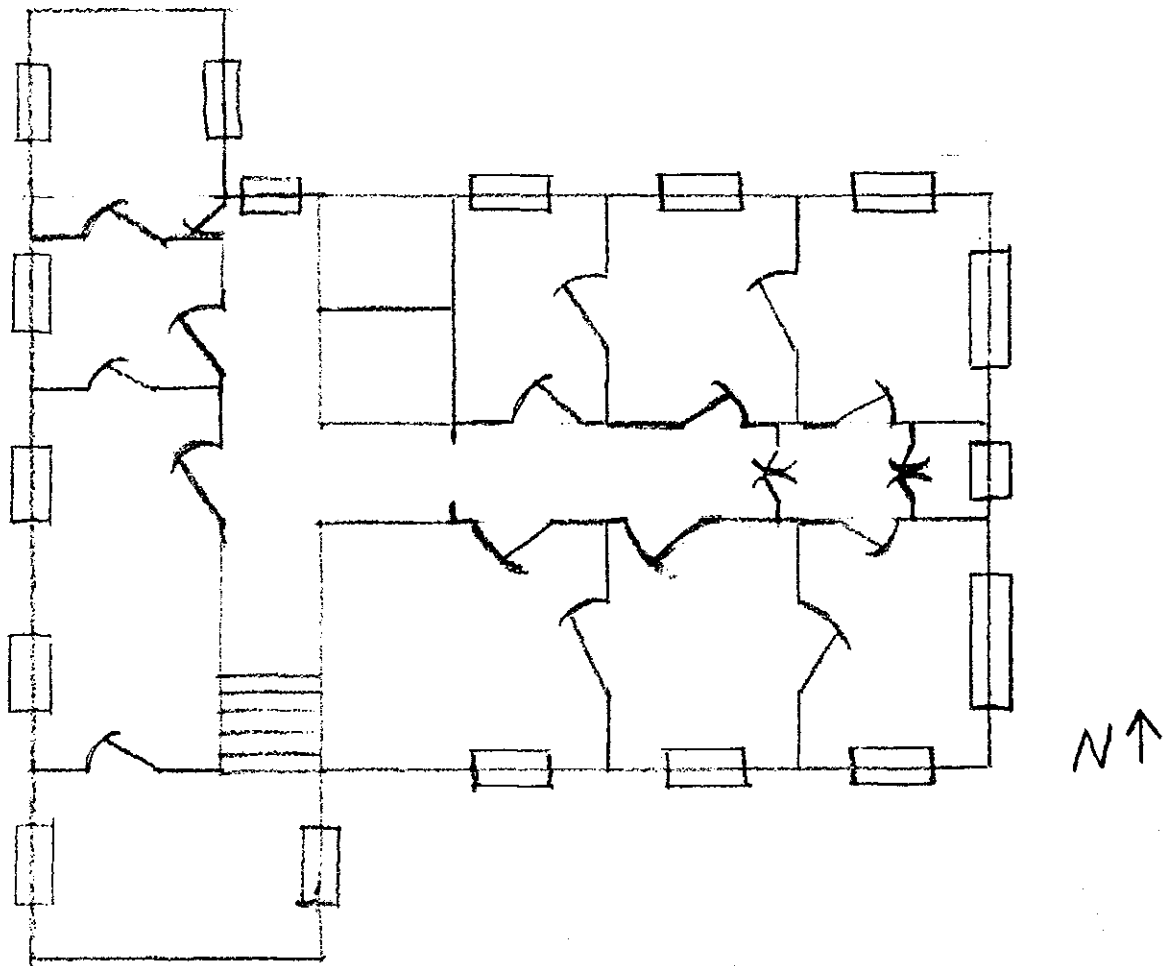
Prepared by:
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Arlington Heritage Alliance Inc.
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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation project was coordinated by Sara Amy Leach for the Arlington Heritage Alliance Inc., with the sponsorship of the Bell Atlantic Charitable Foundation, to mitigate the impending loss of these historic Arlington County buildings. Estella Bryans-Munson served as project historian, and John Schwartz was the large-format photographer. All documentation is available from the HABS Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, at the Library of Congress, and the Virginia Room of the Arlington County Library.



Sketch plan, first floor. Not drawn to scale. By Bryans-Munson.



Sketch plan, second floor. Not drawn to scale. By Bryans-Munson.